Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the Abstract with the attached substitute Abstract.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 25, with the following rewritten paragraph:

Mannich bases prepared by means of the process of the invention have very low viscosities. The ratio $k(\eta_1/\eta_2)$ between the viscosity of the Mannich base prepared by a one-stage process (η_1) to the viscosity of the Mannich base prepared by the inventive two-stage process (η_2) is greater than 1, preferably greater than ~~2,5,~~ 2.5, in particular greater than 3.